MOONSTONE
#9
$3.50
THE PHANTOM™
Chuck Dixon
EricJ
Peter Guzman

THE PHANTOM

created by LEE FALK

"SLAVE TRADE"

PART ONE OF TWO

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PENCILLED BY ERIC J
INKED BY PETER GUZMAN
COLORED BY KEN WOLAK
WITH DAVE ALUSIK AND WALLY LOWE
LETTERED BY TERI BOYLE
EDITED BY LORI G
COVER BY DOUG KLAUBA

SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR PHANTOM CONSULTANTS
DR. BRYAN SHEDDEN
AND ED RHOADES

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They're called conflict diamonds.
That refers to raw diamonds dug up in Third World countries, usually by slave labor.
The stones are sold uncut in Europe and the United States to fund civil wars and strongmen.
Which brought me to Antwerp.

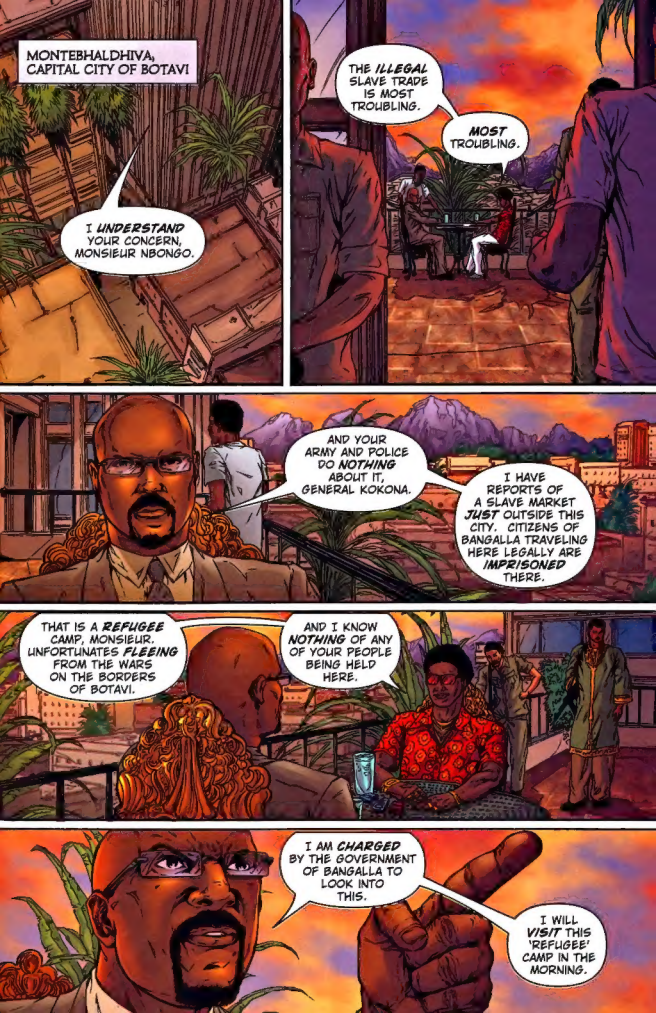
The world's largest diamond and rare gem traders are there.
But it's against international law to trade conflict diamonds on the world market.
AAAAHHHH!
That explained the guy with the machete.

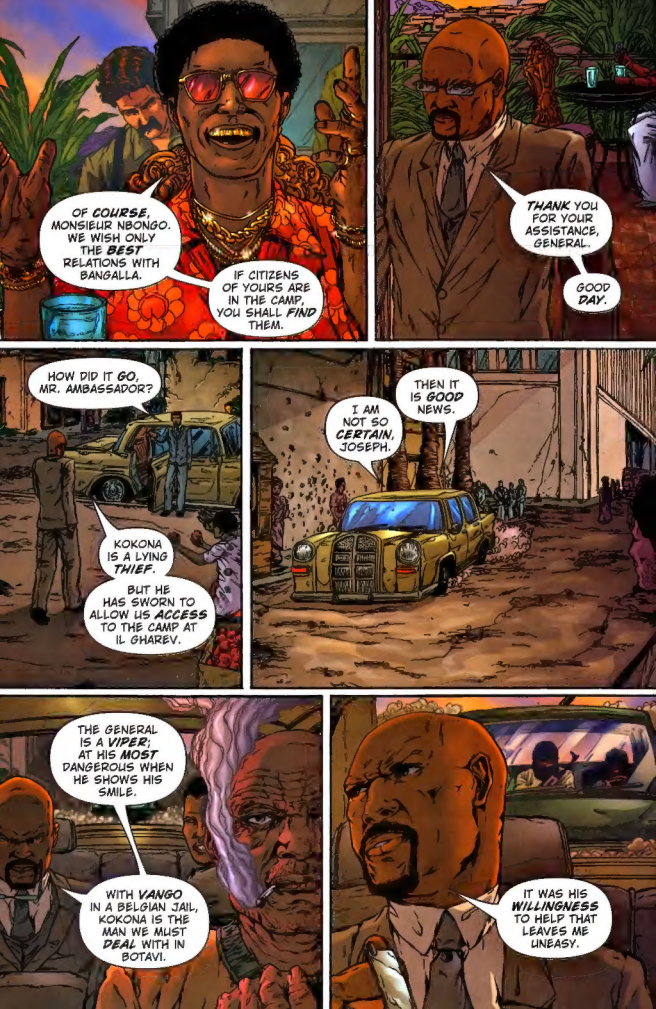
The guy in the tux was Augustus Vango.
The unelected prime minister-for-life of the Republic of Botavi.
QUI EST -- ?
OH!
Mrs. Vango didn't make the trip.
The thugs were the Malique brothers. Belgian muscle and hot for diamonds.
MEAN PERSON

In a trade where brutality was a given, the Maliques were *legends* for their capacity for cruelty.
And there were *three* of them. Big brother Andre being the worst.
I had what I came for and no desire for the attentions of the gendarmerie.
Time for a quick *adieu*.

The stones went with me. That put a big hole in Vango's oppression budget.
They went a long way to funding a hospital for war orphans in the friendly country next door to Botavi.
A few found their way to Interpol and the Belgian police with Vango's fingerprints on them.
It was quite a scene at Brussels International when he tried to head home.
I'm sorry I missed it.
MEAN PERSON

KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI
MY FRIENDS, YOU HAVE DONE SO MUCH IN THE NAME OF GOD'S LOVE.
OUR CONGREGATION AND THE OTHER CHURCHES IN THE K.C. AREA HAVE CONTRIBUTED CLOSE TO HALF A MILLION DOLLARS.
THIS WILL ALLOW US TO FUND OUR MISSION IN SAHELIAN AFRICA FOR THE NEXT TWO YEARS.
AND ONE OF OUR VERY OWN, KATHY PREBBLE, WILL BE BRINGING THE WORD AND OUR BLESSINGS TO THE PEOPLE THERE.
KATHY, WOULD YOU STEP FORWARD AND SPEAK TO YOUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS?
THANK YOU, REVEREND NOLAN.
THE MONEY YOU'VE SO GENEROUSLY GIVEN WILL NOT ONLY BUY BIBLES AND BUILD CHAPELS IN THE SAHEL.
IT WILL BE USED TO BUY THE FREEDOM OF CHRISTIAN AFRICANS NOW HELD IN SLAVERY.
YOUR DOLLARS WILL LIFT MANY OF OUR BRETHREN FROM BONDAGE.
WONDERFUL WORK, KATHY.
LET US ALL NOW PRAY FOR OUR SISTER'S SAFETY AND SUCCESS.


MONTEBHALDHIVA, CAPITAL CITY OF BOTAVI
I UNDERSTAND YOUR CONCERN, MONSIEUR NBONGO.
THE ILLEGAL SLAVE TRADE IS MOST TROUBLING.
MOST TROUBLING.
AND YOUR ARMY AND POLICE DO NOTHING ABOUT IT, GENERAL KOKONA.
I HAVE REPORTS OF A SLAVE MARKET JUST OUTSIDE THIS CITY. CITIZENS OF BANGALLA TRAVELING HERE LEGALLY ARE IMPRISONED THERE.
THAT IS A REFUGEE CAMP, MONSIEUR. UNFORTUNATES FLEEING FROM THE WARS ON THE BORDERS OF BOTAVI.
AND I KNOW NOTHING OF ANY OF YOUR PEOPLE BEING HELD HERE.
I AM CHARGED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF BANGALLA TO LOOK INTO THIS.
I WILL VISIT THIS 'REFUGEE' CAMP IN THE MORNING.


OF COURSE, MONSIEUR NBONGO. WE WISH ONLY THE BEST RELATIONS WITH BANGALLA.
IF CITIZENS OF YOURS ARE IN THE CAMP, YOU SHALL FIND THEM.
THANK YOU FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE, GENERAL.
GOOD DAY.
HOW DID IT GO, MR. AMBASSADOR?
KOKONA IS A LYING THIEF.
BUT HE HAS SWORN TO ALLOW US ACCESS TO THE CAMP AT IL GHAREV.
I AM NOT SO CERTAIN, JOSEPH.
THEN IT IS GOOD NEWS.
THE GENERAL IS A VIPER; AT HIS MOST DANGEROUS WHEN HE SHOWS HIS SMILE.
WITH VANGO IN A BELGIAN JAIL, KOKONA IS THE MAN WE MUST DEAL WITH IN BOTAVI.
IT WAS HIS WILLINGNESS TO HELP THAT LEAVES ME UNEASY.

NO! NO! THIS IS A DIPLOMATIC MISSION! YOU MUST--
UNNH!
YOU WISH TO SEE THE SLAVE CAMP AT IL GHAREV, BANGALI?
YOU WILL HAVE CAUSE TO REGRET YOUR WISH.

IL GHAREV.
The slave trade is Africa's dirty little secret. But it's an *open* secret.
The entire world knows about it but very little is done.
It's a business and the market is brisk.
This business is more than naked commerce though.
It's persecution. Enslavement is used to oppress disenfranchised tribes.
Here in Botavi it is used to keep down Coptic Christians and animist nomads.
Like its sister atrocity starvation, slavery is a weapon.

The customers came to the auction from all corners of the netherworld of forced labor.
From outlaw nations in need of a workforce.
From the coffee economies and mining concerns of former colonies.
Most of them I knew.
One of them I didn't.
And Mr. Walker was in attendance as well.

REC
WHO'S THIS ONE, THEN?
WHICH ONE, DES?
x10
01:23:3675

REC
THAT ONE, EARL. THE TALL ONE IN THE ARAB GET-UP.
HE A SHEIK OR SULTAN OR THE LIKE, DES?
x10
01:23:4273

NOT BLOODY LIKELY. I NEVER SEEN A SHEIK THAT TALL.
AN' LOOK HOW HE WALKS, EARL.
WALKS?

WE GOIN' TO MOVE CLOSER, DES?
THE BBC DOESN'T PAY EITHER OF US ENOUGH TO TAKE THOSE KINDS OF RISKS.

THESE HIGH-PLACED ARABS WALK LIKE THEY GOT ALL THE MONEY IN THE WORLD TO SPEND AND ALL THE TIME TO SPEND IT.
THIS CHAP MOVES LIKE A TIGER ON THE PROWL.

WE HEAD BACK TO THE ROAD JUNCTURE AND WAIT FOR THE HIGH BIDDER AND HIS NEW PURCHASES TO COME ALONG.
AND I'VE A FEELING IT'S LIKELY TO BE OUR 'ARAB' FRIEND.

There were some high rollers among the lowlife here.
Sales would move quickly with the prices high.
SALAAM!
BON JOUR!
GOOD MORNING!
WE HAVE MANY, MANY CHOICE SELECTIONS TODAY!
STRONG BACKS FOR MINING OR FARMING! NIMBLE FINGERS FOR FACTORY WORK.
WOMEN, MEN AND CHILDREN. ALL OF BEST HEALTH.
ALL GIVING LONG YEARS OF SERVICE.
ENJOY FOOD AND DRINK AS WE READY FOR THE SALES!
UM...NO THANK YOU.
ALLAH FROWNS ON STRONG DRINK.

FOUR MEN UNDER THE AGE OF THIRTY. STRONG LIMBS. GOOD TEETH.
THE BIDING IS IN EUROS, MY GOOD FRIENDS. WHO WILL BUY THESE EXCELLENT LABORERS?
THREE HUNDRED FOR THE SET.
THREE TWENTY PLEASE.
ONE THOUSAND EUROS!
More than twice the going rate. An American from her accent.
YES, MADAME.
THE MADAME KNOW QUALITY, NO?

TWO THOUSAND EUROS!
The rest of the morning went much the same.
BIDDING IS CLOSED!
ANY MORE BIDS?
And each auction was won by the young American with the innocent face.
MAY I SIT DOWN, MISS?
OH!
I SUPPOSE.
YOUR ACCENT. TEXAS?
CLOSE ENOUGH. OKLAHOMA.
WHAT IS YOUR INTEREST HERE?
YOU DON'T LOOK LIKE A SLAVETRADER.
I'M NOT A SLAVETRADER!
I'M BUYING THESE PEOPLE THEIR FREEDOM!

REALLY?
AND ARE YOU AT ALL AWARE OF THE ENEMIES YOU'VE MADE HERE TODAY?
WELL...
I CAN'T HELP THAT.
WHAT IF THESE CRIMINALS GET TICKED AT ME?
MY ONLY CONCERN IS FREEING SOULS KEPT IN BONDAGE.
PRETTY WORDS.
DO YOU REALIZE THAT YOU AND GROUPS LIKE YOU ARE DRIVING THE MARKET IN SLAVES?
WITH YOUR WILD BIDDING YOU'RE SETTING PRICES HIGHER.
I HAVE TO MAKE SURE I WIN EACH AUCTION.
AND YOU'RE MAKING THE SLAVE TRADE MORE PROFITABLE AS A RESULT.
AND THERE ARE OTHER CONSEQUENCES.
MOST OF THOSE YOU FREE WILL ONLY BE ENSLAVED AGAIN WITHIN A FEW MONTHS.
YOU'LL HAVE TO BUY THEM ALL OVER AGAIN.

I'M NOT LISTENING TO YOU ANY MORE.
WHY WOULD I BELIEVE THE LIES OF A MAN WHO BUYS AND SELLS HUMAN LIVES?
After our break for drinks and comestibles the sales resumed.
A NEW PARCEL OF FINE MALES.
SOME ARE OLDER, BUT STILL FIT.
This is the packet I came for.
FOR USE IN KITCHEN WORK OR LOADING FREIGHT.
FIVE HUNDRED.
EIGHT HUNDRED.
ONE THOUSAND.
FOUR THOUSAND.

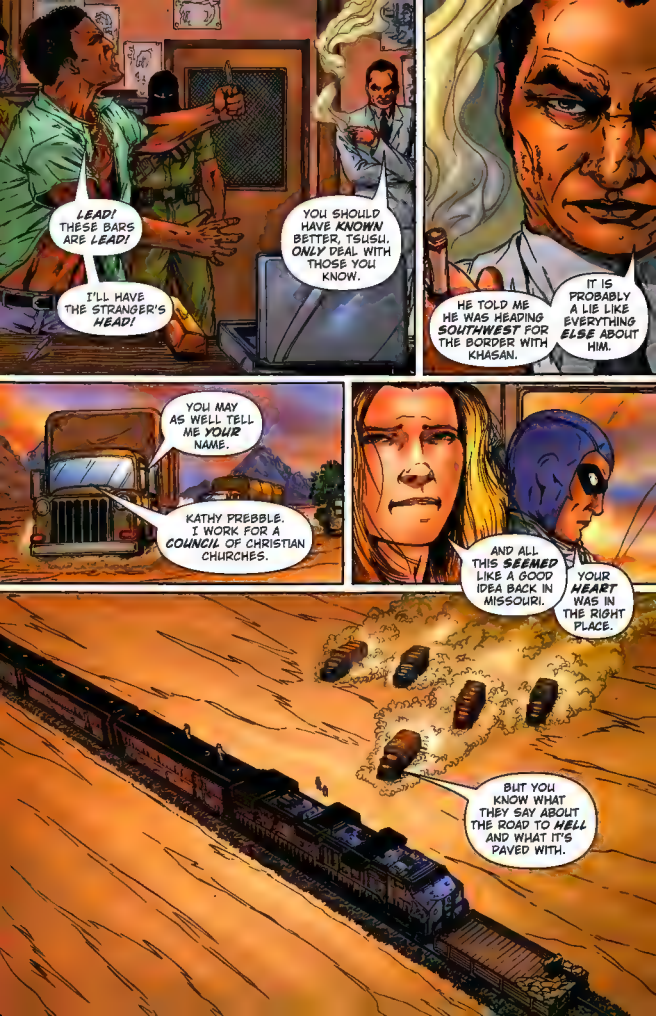
NO MORE. TOO RICH.
MOST EXCELLENT.
THE LADY WINS ONCE MORE.
ONE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY TWO THOUSAND EUROS FOR ONE HUNDRED AND FIVE ABLE BODIES.
HOW DO YOU WISH TO PAY, MADAME? GEMS? CASH?
A DRAFT DRAWN ON THE BANCO SUISSE FOR THE FULL AMOUNT.
AS GOOD AS CASH.
A CHECK?
YOU WISH TO BUY SLAVES WITH A CHECK?
IT'S BACKED BY THE GUARANTEE OF A SWISS BANK. THE FUNDS ARE THERE.
A SLAVETRADER QUESTIONS MY HONESTY?

YOU ARE MAD! YOU WASTE MY TIME! YOU COST ME MONEY!
THAT IS MONEY, YOU ARROGANT CREEP!
THERE WILL BE A NEW AUCTION! WITH A NEW ITEM FOR SALE!
A VERY RARE ITEM.
WHAT?
HEY, HOLD ON ONE SECOND!
I'M AN AMERICAN CITIZEN!
I'M PREPARED TO MATCH THE LADY'S OFFERS WITH A BONUS FOR HER.
PERHAPS I CAN OFFER A SOLUTION TO THIS?
RELEASE HER.
I PREFER MY MERCHANDISE WITHOUT BRUISES.
AND HOW WILL YOU PAY, SIR? POUND NOTES? DOLLARS?
THIS IS NOT HAPPENING.

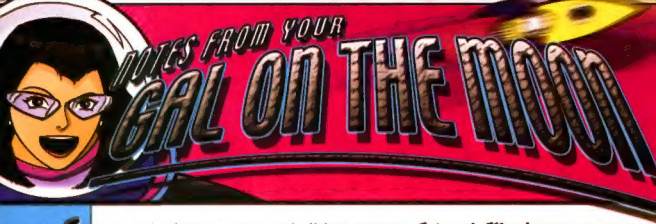
NOTHING SO INELEGANT.
400 OUNCES EACH TROY WEIGHT.
THAT MORE THAN COVERS THE LADY'S BIDS AS WELL AS THE LADY'S PRICE.
MOST SATISFACTORY.
MOST EQUITABLE.
THE SLAVES ARE YOURS. THE LADY IS YOURS.
WELL, IT LOOKS AS THOUGH YOU WON'T BE WALKING AWAY FROM ME AGAIN.
I AM NOT GOING WITH YOU!
I CAN GET A RECEIPT IF YOU DON'T BELIEVE ME.
THIS IS AN OUTRAGE!
NO.
THE OUTRAGE WILL OCCUR IF I LEAVE YOU TO THE TENDER MERCY OF OUR HOST.
YOU EITHER COME WITH ME AND QUIETLY OR YOU'LL BE PRAYING FOR DEATH BY SUNDOWN.
NOW MOVE ALONG.
WE HAVE A BUSY AFTERNOON AHEAD OF US.

Men of the Jungle Patrol volunteered for this expedition.
Even with execution or enslavement a certainty if we were discovered.
But not one man among them could be discouraged from rescuing a Bangalli from this hell.
Whether a common bushman or a dignitary like Peter Nbongo.
WHERE ARE YOU FROM, STRANGER?
I FEEL AS THOUGH WE'VE MET.
PERHAPS. IT'S A SMALL WORLD.
I NEEDED THOSE LABORERS TO MEET A QUOTA.
WHAT BUSINESS ARE YOU IN THAT YOU REQUIRE SO MANY?
THEN YOU SHOULD HAVE COME BETTER PREPARED.
COCA FIELDS IN THE ULASA VALLEY. WE HAVE QUOTAS AS WELL.
The Ulasa Valley is to the south and west.
It was not our destination but the lie would buy us time.

YOU'RE A DRUGLORD AND A SLAVER?
AND A LIAR.
I'M NEITHER.
I'M CALLED BY MANY NAMES.
DON'T LET THE OUTFIT FOOL YOU. I'M ONE OF THE GOOD GUYS.
OH-KAY.
I WAS EXPECTING THIS LITTLE VACATION TO BE DIFFERENT. BUT---
AND WHO WAS LECTURING ME ON ARTIFICALLY INFLATING SLAVE VALUES?
I'M NO GOLD EXPERT, BUT THOSE BARS WERE WAY OVER THE ASKING PRICE.
THERE ARE ALL KINDS OF MASKS, MISS.
NOTHING IS AS IT SEEMS.
NO...


LEAD! THESE BARS ARE LEAD!
I'LL HAVE THE STRANGER'S HEAD!
YOU SHOULD HAVE KNOWN BETTER, TSUGU. ONLY DEAL WITH THOSE YOU KNOW.
HE TOLD ME HE WAS HEADING SOUTHWEST FOR THE BORDER WITH KHASAN.
IT IS PROBABLY A LIE LIKE EVERYTHING ELSE ABOUT HIM.
YOU MAY AS WELL TELL ME YOUR NAME.
KATHY PREBBLE. I WORK FOR A COUNCIL OF CHRISTIAN CHURCHES.
AND ALL THIS SEEMED LIKE A GOOD IDEA BACK IN MISSOURI.
YOUR HEART WAS IN THE RIGHT PLACE.
BUT YOU KNOW WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT THE ROAD TO HELL AND WHAT IT'S PAVED WITH.

YOU ARE FREE MEN AND WOMEN. BOARD THE TRAIN NOW.
THERE IS FOOD AND FRESH WATER IN THE CARS AND MEDICAL CARE FOR THOSE WHO NEED IT.
AMBASSADOR NBONGO, READY TO GO BACK TO BANGALLA?
THE PHANTOM. I BELIEVED YOU WERE ONLY A LEGEND.
LET'S HOPE I CAN LIVE UP TO THAT, SIR.
SO, YOU ARE A REAL HERO.
NO, THAT'S MY HORSE.
WE HAVE FIVE HUNDRED MILES OF BAD TRACK TO COVER WITHOUT MUCH OF A HEAD START.
And we won't be travelling alone.



Greetings and salutations to one and all from your auto Gal on the Moon! **Welcome one and all to our new regular ongoing feature at Moonstone, your monthly dose of what is new under the Moon, hosted by ME The Gal on the Moon! (a.k.a. Lori G., editor) First off, I have some letters I would like to share:**

I just finished reading the conclusion to Belle Starr and really dug it! I know the character is based on an actual person and would love to read an interview with Mark that sheds some light on how much is fact and how much is fiction! Keep up the good work at Moonstone!

Matt Kantar

I'm glad you enjoyed Belle Starr, Matt! Don't worry, I plan on interviewing Mr. Ricketts soon, he is going to be part of our new western anthology. In fact, we have lots of western-related plans in the works. Stay tuned for more information.

Dear Moonwatchers,

True to its protagonist's prophetic life, Khan #1 was one of the most auspicious beginnings in comics this year. DeFalco and Hudson manage to be not just entertaining but downright important, getting fully inside their leading man's complex and troubled mind and trusting the reader to make up their own, in a comic that's black and white in design only. DeFalco is a master at dropping us into a distant time and (for many) unfamiliar culture and picking out the clues that get us to comprehend it without any intrusive explanation, and Hudson's lean and energetic style make a lost world look very real and present.
Genghis's conquests may be long past, but Moonstone's Khan is a winner.

Adam McGovern
McGovernNix@aol.com

Adam, thanks so much for the kind words! And thanks for the "moonwatchers" moniker, I like

Vengeance of the Mummy #1 by Moonstone:
I just purchased Vengeance of the Mummy #1 and I must say that this is like no mummy story I ever seen before, this is way different than Boris Karloff in the Mummy, especially when you have a agile mummified woman leaping quickly and jumping onto the roof of a car. There was action galore and even though the artwork was black and white, it fits right with the story and the artwork is incredibly detailed. That rabbit named Briar, gave me the creeps, his DNA has been altered in an experiment and the bunny dies, only to come alive again through nano bandages, now he is more aggressive and he is much stronger. Wow! If that happened to Briar, imagine what will happen to humans! That Jack 'the Hatchet' character is creepy and what is with a room full of mummies? This is one strange comic book that kept me mummified from the beginning page to the ending page!

Sincerely yours,

Paul Dale Roberts, Jazma Prime Minister
Jazma Online!

Well, thanks Paul! Vengeance of the Mummy is unlike any other mummy book you've ever read, I have to agree with you. Keep on reading, and thanks for letting us know what you think! That goes for the rest of you too, please let us know how we are doing: what you like, and yes, even what you don't like. Moonstone is all about the fans, we publish comics for all of you, and we always value your opinion. I just love hearing from everybody, so keep those letters/emails coming my way.

So, what's new under the moon? What kind of exciting new books are on the horizon? So glad you asked!

DECEMBER 2005:

THE PHANTOM #9

32 pages, color - Story by Chuck Dixon, art by Eric J, and painted cover by Doug Klauba Part one of two.

"They are called conflict diamonds." The Phantom is in Antwerp, running down a lead in an effort to stop the diamond trade. Meanwhile in America's heartland Kathy Prebble is about to embark on missionary work sponsored by her church. Her work will be dangerously proactive; she plans to be the high bidder at an illegal slave market. Meaning well, but too naïve, she sets off a chain of events that lead her to a mysterious stranger…who is dressed in…PURPLE. Amazing action with highly-detailed interior art that is sure to make you clamor all the more for issue #10, coming in March '06.

BUCKAROO BANZAI: THE PREVIEW

ONLY 50 CENTS, 16 pgs, b/w- Story by Mac Rauch and WD Richter, Art by Stephen Thomson and Keith Williams, Cover by Dennis Calero

Get this preview issue to whet your appetite for what is sure to be the smash-hit of 2006! The return of Buckaroo Banzai! All you sci-fi/adventure film buffs take note, this special intro issue will include pages of art from issue #1 of the all new color mini series coming spring 2006 from Moonstone, back story on the characters, pin-up art, and more! 50 cents, how can you go wrong?

JANUARY 2006:

THE PHANTOM: THE GHOST WHO WALKS TPB

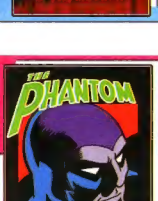
$17.95, color, 172 pages

New printing with an ALL NEW Doug Klauba painted cover! This will be the only time this SOLD OUT TPB will be reprinted! This action-packed volume contains the first three Phantom graphic novels published by Moonstone: "The Ghost Killers," "The Singh Web," and the SOLD OUT "Treasures of Bangalla!" Extras include pin-ups, sketches, author/artist commentary, and cover gallery.

CYCLONE BILL AND THE TALL TALES

$16.95, 232 pages - Original graphic novel by Dan Dougherty

At the height of his popularity, Bill Czynkowski, guitarist and bandleader for Cyclone Bill and the Tall Tales, is shot dead in front of a packed house. In piecing together what happened that night, the remaining Tall Tales wonder if a supernatural force was behind his murder. Only filmmaker Maggie Bloom has the footage to solve the mystery, but she may have lost her mind in search for fame. It seems a man whose soul is one with rock n roll itself is haunting her. Who is this man, and with what power does he confront the players in our tale? From stardom's dizzying heights to midnight's darkest crossroad, the answer will terrify all who seek quick deals for fame and immortality.



THE PHANTOM: THE GRAHAM NOLAN HARDCOVER COLLECTION

$69.99, 250 pages, color

This stunning hardcover contains both volumes of the Graham Nolan Sundays trade paperbacks. To add to this special edition, each of the 1000 limited edition copies will also have *a signed Phantom sketch tip-sheet, hand-signed by Nolan*. A must have for all true phans!

As you can see boys and girls, Moonstone keeps cranking out the quality comic book reads! And as always, there is more to come! I have to let everybody know that the ALL NEW Moonstone message board is up and running at the Moonstone website: www.moonstonebooks.com. I have my own section on there, with links to all the interviews I've conducted so far for Moonstone, including December's interview with Phantom #9's Chuck Dixon and Eric J. Be sure to check it out, along with all the other features: links to news/reviews, areas devoted to all our fan-favorite projects like westerns, noir, The Phantom, Kolchak the Nightstalker and more! In honor of this special event, we are having a very cool contest to kick things off, check for details online. We are giving away an original page of Phantom art by Eric J and Peter Guzman from Issue #9, WOWZA!

That's all for now, and as always thanks for supporting Moonstone for over 10 years! Can't find Moonstone comics at your LCS? You can always order direct from the Moonstone website. Questions or comments about Moonstone or any title in particular, send them my way! You can email me at moonstone_gal@yahoo.com or go to the message board on www.moonstonebooks.com, and the "Gal on the Moon" section is where you want to post those questions/comments. Can't wait to chat with you all again, soon! Oh, I almost forgot! I'm still running my little contest; help me name this column. I've had some interesting suggestions so far, but nothing has really "grabbed" me yet, so keep 'em coming, baby!

Moonstone Gal out!
Kisses,
Lori G.

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THE PHANTOM
KOLCHAK: the Night Stalker
MOONSTONE NOIR
MOONSTONE MONSTERS
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SHAZAM!

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doodle